10: Neill #4(no date) 1884 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

175 they are represented as a treacherous, deceitful people, always
648 taking advantage of their neighbors, and favoring the Sioux when they come to war this way, and frequently intermix with them to annoy the Mandans and Big Bellies.

SIGN LANGUAGE.

201 This language is entirely different from the natives of this place, and it is only by signs that they usually communicate with each other, excepting a few among them who understand each other's language. It serves as interpreter upon any affair of importance. It is surprising how dexterous all these natives of the plains are, in the art of communicating their ideas by signs. They will hold conference, for several hours together, upon different subjects, and during the whole time not a single word will be pronounced upon either side, and still they appear to comprehend each other perfectly well. This mode of communication appears to be quite natural to them, other difficult events are performed with the greatest ease and readiness. They never seem to be at loss, or in want of a sign to express their meaning.

COURTESY TO STRANGERS.

648 Soon after our arrival, there was a great uproar occasioned
721 by the unexpected visit of six Pawnees, from their own vil-
728 lage, sixty leagues below this, on the banks of the same (Missouri) river. They were sent upon an embassy to treat for peace. It appears that last spring, some of these people had accompanied a war party of Sioux who came here and killed five Mandans. The latter nation, in company with the Big Bellies (Gros Ventres,) soon after returned the visit, and not finding the Sioux, on their return killed two Pawnees, but this did not satisfy them. They had informed the Pawnees that they might expect a more formal visit the ensuing fall; that both the Mandans and Big Bellies were determined to exterminate every Pawnee they could find, and lay their villages even with the ground.

To avoid this storm, the latter thought prudent to sue for
● [202] peace. A messenger was instantly dispatched to the upper villages to give information of their arrival. In the meantime the strangers were very hospitably entertained, conducted into a hut, and presented with corn and beans, dried meats, etc. All were now silent for some time, awaiting the determination of the Big Bellies.

ARRIVAL OF GROS VENTRES.

The Big Bellies, in a short time, arrived on horse-back; about thirty men came down full speed; they brought down an inter-

[Category 116, p. 335.—A.]